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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 002233

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: ANTI-MINUSTAH PROTESTS COMMEMORATE NATIONAL HOLIDAY

REF: A. PAP 2065
[1](#)B. PAP 2087

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[1](#)1. (U) This message sensitive but unclassified: please protect accordingly.

[1](#)2. (U) Summary: A spasm of anti-Minustah sentiment surfaced in Port-au-Prince leading up to and on November 18, a national holiday commemorating the 203rd anniversary of the Battle of Vertieres which led to Haitian independence in [1](#)1804. Several anti-Minustah protests took place in Haiti's capital, including a student protest which resulted in two student injuries and attacks on UN troops in the area. During the official commemoration of the holiday at the National Palace, Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis said he was not proud to commemorate the holiday given that foreign troops were currently on the ground in Haiti. Gang-led protests continue to occur in Cite Soleil, likely in response to an increase in Minustah-led operations in the Port-au-Prince slum. End summary.

Second Student Protest Results in Several Injured
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[1](#)3. (SBU) According to news reports, dozens of anti-Minustah protests occurred in Port-au-Prince on November 18, the anniversary of the Battle of Vertieres. The most visible protest was organized by students of the State University of Humanities, who had filed for a demonstration permit that the Haitian National Police (HNP) approved. This was their second anti-Minustah protest (reftel A) and consisted of no more than 150 people. According to Jean Philippe Laberge of Minustah's Office of Civil Affairs, the protests are well organized within the university, but are not coordinated with gangs or others having their own motivations to mount.

[1](#)4. (U) During the student protest, which ended near the Presidential Palace, UN police (including those who came under attack) were in the area doing electrical work near a UN base. The students threw rocks at the troops and broke the windshield of at least one UN vehicle. One UN police officer from Niger was wounded in the shoulder. The UN police troops took refuge in the local UN base near the Presidential Palace. (Note: According to a UN contact,

downtown Port-au-Prince was off-limits to UN Police and Minustah troops because of the threat of anti-UN protests. End note.)

15. (SBU) One student protester was badly injured after a security guard from Socabank shot him. One other student was mildly wounded by the same gunfire. Minustah's civilian affairs office and RSO reported that the guard panicked and that the shooting was not justified. The injured student was taken to a hospital and is in stable condition. The guard has been arrested by the HNP.

PM Alexis Expressed Bitterness over Foreign Troop Presence in Haiti

16. (U) President Rene Preval, Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis, several ministers and a parade of HNP officers gathered at the National Palace to officially commemorate the holiday, described by local news reports as the anniversary of the last heroic feat of Haiti's indigenous army against colonial troops. News reports also noted that "contrary to the protocol of this holiday's commemorations, the President did not make a statement." Instead, PM Alexis spoke, reminding the audience that the Haitian military (Forces Armees d'Haiti -- FAd'H) no longer exists. Alexis highlighted that 125 million Haitian gourdes (about USD 3.2 million) are set aside in the FY2007 budget for a study on the possible creation of a new security force in Haiti. Alexis said that he attended the comemoration "with bitterness," but took consolation in the fact that the foreign troops were mandated by the UN, of which Haiti is a member. Minustah was invited by former President Jean Bertrand Aristide's government as well as the interim government, and Haitians bear responsibility for the state of the country today. He closed by calling for

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everyone to work together to reach a point where Minustah can depart as soon as possible.

Gangs Conduct Anti-Minustah Protest in Cite Soleil

17. (SBU) A small protest also occurred in Cite Soleil on November 17 protesting the presence of Minustah troops and calling for the return of former President Aristide. (Note: Often protests are hijacked by competing interests. In this case, it appears that protest started as an anti-Minustah demonstration, but attracted pro-Aristide demonstrators who wanted to take advantage of the gathering. End note.) This was the second gang-led protest in Cite Soleil in one week in response to encroaching Minustah operations in Cite Soleil over the past two months, which were increased following the murder of two Jordanian soldiers who appeared at the scene of a kidnapping November 11. A larger protest on October 29 spoke out against recent deaths at the hands of Minustah on October 17 (reftel B).

18. (SBU) Comment: The November 18 holiday commemorating the Battle of Vertieres -- which is also recognized as the anniversary of the FAd'H -- brought to fore the great national pride Haitians have in their military and its role in Haiti's independence. As PM Alexis said, the day was filled with bitterness for many Haitians: not only has Haiti's army been disbanded, but also, they are faced with the presence of foreign troops on a day commemorating the last battle of Haitian forces against French colonial troops. This frustration with Minustah is only exaggerated by the sentiment among Haitians that Minustah is not carrying out its mandate to provide the population with a secure environment.

SANDERSON